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A NEW NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICE CONCEPT FOR LOS ANGELES

By

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Prepared for the Los Angeles City Charter Commission  
October, 1968

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## THE PROBLEM

The urban crisis has many aspects. We are familiar with the problems of transportation and parking, air and water pollution, deteriorating central business districts, and parochial suburbanites. We have paid far less attention, however, to the problem of the alienated and powerless citizen--a problem considered the gravest manifestation of the urban crisis by many contemporary social scientists. "Powerlessness" and "alienation" are terms that are often used but seldom precisely defined. They are bandied about in an attempt to explain the reasons for such diverse phenomena as riots, sit-ins, assassinations, and hippie gatherings, but there is little understanding of these terms and their significance.

Many studies have shown that a man can be alienated from society as a whole, from its political or economic system, and from his family, his job, and himself.<sup>1</sup> He can manifest his alienation in riots, criminal activity, delinquency, or apathy. Generally, however, an alienated individual has a sense of impotence and meaningless existence; he is frustrated because he has little control over his environment, slight personal satisfaction with his own life and only a minimal sense of participation in the political and economic life of his universe.

A feeling of powerlessness may lead to alienation. A person is powerless when the actions he takes make no difference in the general scheme of things, when the decision-making process does not take his desires into account, and when there is nothing he can do as an individual to move the system one way or the other. The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders discusses in its report the frustrations of powerlessness which,

<sup>1</sup> David O. Arnold, The American Way of Death: The Roots of Violence in American Society (Los Angeles: Institute of Government and Public Affairs, University of California, 1968), p. 2.





it feels, "have led some to the conviction that there is no effective alternative to violence as a means of expression and redress, as a way of 'moving the system.' More generally the result is alienation and hostility toward the institutions of law and government."<sup>2</sup>

Alienation and powerlessness may occur more frequently in individuals of low socioeconomic status but are by no means limited to that group. The major cities are too large for direct decision-making by the people so that the effects of bigness are felt by all classes of society--ghetto dwellers as well as middle class and wealthy big-city residents.

When the governments of large cities concentrate on service problems to the virtual exclusion of enhancing the relationships between citizens and the city's policymakers and administrators, dissatisfaction results. The citizens feel frustrated because they cannot communicate effectively and some public officials and employees feel they are operating in a vacuum.

If democratic processes are to be retained in big cities, there must be adequate communication and interaction between the individual citizens and their city governments. If the citizen becomes apathetic, the government will become complacent and unresponsive. We have heard laments about the demise of big city political machines which, in spite of their obvious faults, did provide the citizen some link with his city officials. We have also witnessed some action toward a "rural renaissance" with deification of the closeness of small-town living and personal relationships with governing authorities. The task facing the City of Los Angeles and other large urban complexes is not the recreation of political machines or small-town governments. The task involves using existing governmental process<sup>45</sup> and mechanisms, or creating new ones if necessary, to involve the local citizen in the affairs of the city. In our search for solutions we must recognize that if local government is not meeting its responsibilities to its people, "this failure is leading

<sup>2</sup> Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (New York: Bantam Books, 1968), p. 205.



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to a growing desire for state and national governments to do the job which local government should be doing, and if assumption of local powers by state and national governments is growing--then we must examine local government critically and act strongly and promptly to stop its disintegration before we lose it. Where is local government failing? Like Rip van Winkle, it has slept too long and has failed to keep alive to change."<sup>3</sup>

There is ample evidence of the slowness of big city government to react to demands for change. Aside from the most obvious manifestation--riots--demands for decentralization of school districts are being heard, new and more effective mechanisms for handling citizen grievances are being advocated, citizen advisory commissions and neighborhood corporations are being discussed. These approaches may be violent or peaceful, but all are illustrative of the accusation that local government is ". . . giving inadequate attention to the individual citizen in the formulation of urban policy [by] giving too much attention to standards of performance and too little attention to the human element."<sup>4</sup> When there are programs aimed at individuals or specific groups they are often fragmented, with interrelated family and individual problems frequently under the jurisdiction of different governmental agencies which may or may not coordinate their efforts. Citizens for whom the programs are devised often find it difficult to discover which agency can best help solve their problems; they may not even be aware that the proper agency does exist.

Citizen grievance procedures have been examined by the staff of the Los Angeles City Charter Commission to determine the adequacy of mechanisms which might provide access by the citizen to his city government. The Commission

<sup>3</sup> James R. Ellis, Lines, Laws and Change, a statement made before the 1959 meeting of the American Institute of Planners in Seattle, p. 6. Mr. Ellis is a prominent attorney and civic leader in the Seattle area.

<sup>4</sup> Involving People in Local Government, Management Information Service Report No. 283 (Washington: International City Managers' Association, August 1967), p. 1.





staff found that city officials considered grievance procedures to be adequate. The City Council, the Mayor's office, and a variety of administrative departments felt that grievances were handled properly through their offices and new procedures were not needed. On the other hand, contrary evidence was found when the Commission staff interviewed representatives from the Mexican-American and Negro communities. Minority residents felt their grievances were given an inadequate response by the city government. The Commission staff is correct in pointing out that a "disparity between the views from inside and the views from outside the City government" is not unusual. However, such a study does demonstrate the existence of a problem in communication between the city government and its citizens. The Commission staff then concluded, "Existing mechanisms to assure citizen access to the City government for the communication of needs and redress of grievances are not adequate in the City of Los Angeles. The views of citizens and groups outside the City administration, particularly in the minority communities, indicate the need is significant enough to warrant consideration of improving the existing mechanisms or establishing new ones."<sup>5</sup>

#### SELECTED REFORM EFFORTS: NATIONWIDE AND OUTSIDE LOS ANGELES

The problems of big cities are generating nationwide concern. Influential public and private organizations and individuals have discussed the urban crisis and have made suggestions for reform to help city governments relate in a more meaningful fashion to their citizens. The Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR),<sup>6</sup> a body made up largely of public officials, in its

<sup>5</sup> Los Angeles City Charter Commission, Staff Report (Los Angeles, July 23, 1968), sec. B7(h), p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> The ACIR is a bipartisan body created by congressional act in 1959. Its membership represents legislative and executive branches of national, state, and local governments and the public at large, and includes Edmund Muskie, the Democratic Vice-Presidential nominee, Spiro Agnew, his Republican counterpart, and Jesse Unruh, speaker of the California Assembly.





New Proposals for 1969 notes:

A growing body of opinion points to the need for increasing citizen involvement in the governmental activities of neighborhoods within large cities. Some observers believe that the disappearance of any meaningful sense of community among residents of large cities and counties in our metropolitan areas has been one of the major causes of the "crisis in the Cities." The complaint is frequently voiced that the gap between the neighborhood and the city hall or the county building has lengthened continually until the distance seems astronomical rather than a few blocks or a few miles.<sup>7</sup>

To counter these complaints the ACIR has recommended model state legislation that would authorize city or county governments to create neighborhood sub-units with limited powers of taxation and local self-government. These units would be created and disbanded by the city council, have a community council of four to nine members, and possess advisory or delegated substantive authority in such functions as planning, zoning, urban renewal, crime prevention, code inspection, recreation, and education.

The Committee for Economic Development (CED), a prominent private organization composed of leading businessmen and educators, has also discussed in a recent report the problems of the individual citizen in highly complex areas. As government becomes more impersonal in large metropolitan cities, it observes, the citizen becomes less involved in the affairs of his government and exhibits less identification with the problems of his community.

The CED study goes on to say:

In congested central cities, as well as in suburban areas, there is a necessity for active citizen participation in public affairs--to clarify neighborhood needs, to propose constructive solutions, and to mobilize voluntary services. . . . [The] dilemma between the need for large-scale unity and the enlistment of active citizen interest is serious, but it may not be insoluble. To insure attention to distinctive neighborhood needs, followed by appropriate and effective action, giant metropolitan centers might be divided into "neighborhood districts," on the order of magnitude of about 50,000 residents each.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, New Proposals for 1969: ACIR State Legislative Program (Washington, June 1968).

<sup>8</sup> Committee For Economic Development, Modernizing Local Government: To Secure a Balanced Federalism (New York, 1966), p. 47.





The neighborhood districts should have small, popularly elected councils which would study the needs of the neighborhood and make recommendations to the city government. Revenue for the council operations would come from the city government. Through the use of such neighborhood councils, the CED believes, the needs of the citizen would be made known to the city government and service levels could be adjusted to them.

### The Kerner Report

The structure of local government and the need for greater citizen participation in governmental affairs are discussed extensively in the Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. The Commission, chaired by Otto Kerner, the Governor of Illinois, noted that in many cases studied the structure of the local government produced "fragmentation of political responsibility and accountability", "the proportion of Negroes in government was substantially smaller than the Negro proportion of the population" and, although some form of grievance machinery existed in seventeen of the twenty cities surveyed, such instruments "did not necessarily achieve their tension-relieving purpose. They were seldom regarded as effective by Negroes who were interviewed."<sup>9</sup> The Commission then found little was being done to ameliorate grievances in the twenty cities, so that, "Viewed from the perspective of the ghetto resident, city government appears distant and unconcerned, the possibility of effective change remote. As a result, tension rises perceptibly; the explosion comes as the climax to a progression of tension-generating incidents. To the city administration, unaware of this growing tension or unable to respond effectively to it, the outbreak of disorder comes as a shock."<sup>10</sup> To establish more effective

<sup>9</sup> Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, p. 137-139.  
<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 288.





communication between the citizen and the local government, and to improve the ability of the government to respond to citizen needs, the Commission made a number of recommendations, two of which are germane here. One called for the establishment of "Neighborhood Action Task Forces" consisting of prominent city officials, local business and church leaders, and community representatives who would open channels of communication, coordinate administrative agencies, cut red tape, and handle threatening incidents in the community. The other recommendation urged the establishment of neighborhood city halls with permanent offices in the neighborhoods staffed by an assistant mayor, representatives of municipal agencies, and aides to city councilmen. This agency would serve to make government closer and more accountable to the citizen. In conclusion, the Commission pointed out, "The demand for a community voice represents a marked and desirable gain over the apathy that existed before. . . . The essential question which city leadership must face is the ultimate goal of community participation."<sup>11</sup>

### The Ombudsman Concept

A widely discussed approach has brought a new and difficult word into general use in the English language. The word is "ombudsman", which means "one who represents another." The office was established in Sweden at the national level in 1809, and since then it has been adopted by six other countries (Finland, Denmark, Norway, West Germany, New Zealand, and England) and one American state (Hawaii). Ombudsmen have been proposed at the state level in California, Wisconsin, Maine, New York, New Mexico, Washington, and many other states, and one such office has been instituted on a temporary basis in Nassau County, New York. The Ombudsman is an independent, high-level official who receives complaints, makes inquiries into the matters

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 297.



involved, and recommends suitable action. The ombudsman presents periodic public reports and may initiate investigations and recommend changes to improve administration. He has no formal powers to effect change but uses persuasion, publicity, and criticism as his remedial weapons.<sup>12</sup>

Adoption of the ombudsman concept has been urged by Jesse Unruh, speaker of the California State Assembly, but such legislation has been defeated twice--in 1965 and 1967. Mr. Unruh and other advocates feel that this official is needed to guide and protect Americans in the face of the growing complexities of government. They feel that although procedures do exist by which citizens may gain access to government at all levels, they are not sufficient to meet the needs of a large segment of the population. Such offices, proponents feel, should be established at national, state, and especially local levels to provide a medium through which citizen complaints may be more easily heard. Although widespread attention is being given to the ombudsman concept, many are quick to point out that even if instituted the ombudsman would not solve many problems about which citizens complain. It is not to be considered the end of reform but one in a series of steps designed to bring the individual closer to his government.

#### Neighborhood Service Centers

In 1967 the national Department of Health, Education, and Welfare issued a report covering research on six neighborhood service centers that had been formed earlier under the auspices of the Office of Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Development to study the reasons for and proposed

<sup>12</sup> The Ombudsman, Report of the Thirty-second American Assembly (New York: Columbia University, October 1967), p. 6.





solutions to the problems of youth in ghetto areas.<sup>13</sup> Over time, these organizations discovered that in order to help the delinquent, pressing family problems would also have to be solved, and they therefore expanded their activities. The authors of the report define the neighborhood service center as a "conveniently located facility, staffed by professional workers and community residents with no training, designed to provide specific and speedy services to people with a wide variety of simple and complex problems."<sup>14</sup> Each of the centers studied differs as to goals, organization, and number of services provided, but each shares certain characteristics. Each one provides information about and referral to local governmental agencies responsible for programs such as employment, welfare, and housing. Each acts to protect client's rights with respect to those agencies. All of them furnish some services, which may include legal aid, day care for children, counseling, training and placement for employment, and health provisions. And each center is a nucleus for organizing residents on certain common problems.

At the time of the issuance of the HEW report, more than 800 neighborhood centers were in operation. Some had been formed for a single purpose, as is true of those mentioned in the report, and are funded directly by a national governmental agency. Others have been set up by municipal governments participating in the Neighborhood Services Program sponsored by four federal agencies--the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, the Department of Labor, and the Office of Economic Opportunity--in an effort to integrate

<sup>13</sup> See Robert Perlman and David Jones, Neighborhood Service Centers (Washington: Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1967). The six centers discussed are: Action for Boston Community Development, Inc. (ABCD), Boston; Crusade for Opportunity (CFO), Syracuse; Community Progress, Inc. (CPI), New Haven; HARYOU-ACT, Central Harlem, New York City; Mobilization for Youth (MFY), New York City; United Planning Organization (UPO), Washington, D. C.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. iii.





individual and family services in a single neighborhood center. Most centers are operated by indigenous community organizations. Some existed before the passage in 1966 of the legislation authorizing the Neighborhood Services Program; formation of many has been stimulated by the Act. Creation of the centers has been prompted by criticisms made in many low-income neighborhoods that needed services were inadequately supplied, city agencies were inaccessible and unresponsive, and low-income residents did not possess the skills required to get through the red tape and impersonal regulations promulgated by local bureaucracies.

The neighborhood center has evolved from the settlement-house tradition of social service and early experiences by local government with administrative decentralization undertaken primarily for purposes of increased departmental efficiency. As federal departments have begun in recent years to provide grants for neighborhood service centers, some local governments have decentralized particular services primarily on the basis of citizen needs. This has been an effort to make citizens feel that their needs are not being subordinated to such objectives as cost reduction and efficiency.

### Neighborhood Corporations

A final illustration of nationwide attention to the problem we have under consideration appears in a volume of essays issued by the Subcommittee on Urban Affairs of the Joint Economic Committee of the United States Congress. The Subcommittee, in seeking to learn more about the causes of urban unrest, asked for the views of a number of people, including those of Milton Kotler, a resident fellow on the staff of the Institute for Policy Studies and advocate of the concept of the neighborhood corporation. In his paper, Mr. Kotler points to the vast distance between a city administration



and its citizens as the greatest contemporary defect of city government, which embodies the dynamics of civil disorder. Accordingly, he admonishes, "In the face of new power seeking self-rule, government must transfer a portion of its authority to the legally organized locality, so that the locality can govern its local matters. By this method government brings the people into liberty and equality. It gives the right to rule to those who have only been ruled. With local authority transferred to new power, that power is harnessed to the constructive task of local decision rather than to the violent struggle against oppression."<sup>15</sup>

The way to proceed with such transfer of authority, Mr. Kotler urges, is to form neighborhood corporations for the purpose of local self-government. They must be established through local neighborhood initiative, leadership, and decision, and the national government must provide some initial funding. He feels certain functions, for example, day-care programs, recreation, libraries, schools, health, and welfare, could be better handled by neighborhood corporations than they are under centralized control. These corporations would begin as private legal structures of a non-profit, tax-exempt nature and <sup>be</sup> eligible for grants of public authority and resources. They would eventually become public bodies, he believes, as their local authority increased and they built a public territorial jurisdiction. The city would then become a federated structure made up of the general city government and neighborhood corporations, a form of urban federalism embodying the Jeffersonian ideal of small communities. Mr. Kotler sees the neighborhood corporation as useful to various types of neighborhoods: "If the white communities were also to have some authority over their schools, some authority over the public good, they would become less vicious, less frightened of the black community. Authority liberalises people."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> U. S. Congress, Joint Economic Committee, Subcommittee on Urban Affairs, *Urban America: Goals and Problems* (Washington, 1967), p. 177.

<sup>16</sup> "Table Talk/Finding the City," *The Center Magazine*, May, 1968, p. 17.





### School Decentralization Efforts

Other decentralization efforts are being discussed and tried in various places throughout the United States. These activities are extensive, the proposed solutions varied. Interest in decentralization has been growing because many city residents have begun to feel powerless in the face of bureaucratic centralization and specialization. As they increasingly sense the need to participate in decisions affecting them their demands upon local governments become more strident and more threatening to bureaucratic structures. Because of the importance of education in a society of increasing technological complexity, demands for more citizen participation in school activities have been heard in various parts of the nation. Extensive interest in school decentralization has developed in Washington, Boston, Detroit, St. Louis, Minneapolis, and New York. There have been activities elsewhere, too. Seattle is thinking about forming an auxiliary black school board to supervise educational operations in Negro areas. Philadelphia has instituted community advisory boards to counsel on the selection of principals and development of curricula. In Chicago three large area school districts, each headed by an associate superintendent with decision-making powers, have been formed; the downtown office dealing with school affairs is being decentralized to develop field headquarters for each district.

The New York school decentralization plan is by far the most ambitious and has consequently generated the most controversy. A commission selected by Mayor John Lindsay and headed by McGeorge Bundy, president of the Ford Foundation, studied the problems of the New York school system and recommended its division into a large number (thirty to sixty) of relatively autonomous community school districts. Each would have an eleven-member board, some members selected by the parents and the others by the mayor,





and a superintendent appointed by the board. A central education agency chosen either by the Mayor alone or by him in cooperation with the community school boards would control citywide educational policy but each community district would be responsible for personnel, curriculum, budgeting, and pupil assignment. The report of the Bundy Commission was approved by the Mayor (but later modified slightly by him), the State Legislature, and many community organizations. Violent objections to the plan have been raised in many quarters, however, chiefly by the New York City Board of Education and the United Federation of Teachers. So far little implementation of the plan has taken place, although decentralization is being tested in three demonstration projects where community boards have been granted only limited power. The transfer of a number of teachers by the community board of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Demonstration School District touched off a crisis which closed down the New York City schools in 1968. At issue are the desire of community school boards to exercise authority over school personnel and the demand by teachers for protection of their present job security.

Participation is not a new concept but one embodied in the democratic system which is to allow all citizens, if they choose, to take part in the decision-making process. Proponents of school decentralization feel that increased citizen participation will serve to generate new ideas, competition, and flexibility and that any increase in parochialism will be more than offset by the benefits gained from decreased citizen apathy. Marilyn Gittell, a scholar who has investigated various school systems and their decentralization efforts, has said:

The school protest movements have raised fundamental questions about the way schools are run. These questions have meaning for the middle-class communities as well; unfortunately too few of them have risen to the challenge.



The powerlessness of the ghetto in determination of school policy is not distinctive to them; it is only that their needs are greater and the responses fewer. But local participation and local control are issues that are vital to the entire population and to the survival of the system.<sup>17</sup>

### The Chicago Riot Report

The report of a commission appointed by Mayor Richard Daley and chaired by Judge Richard B. Austen to study the riots of 1967 in Chicago found that the community organizations existing at that time did not provide sufficient avenues of citizen access to the government or adequate means through which residents might participate very actively in ghetto affairs. The Commission reported that more than half of the residents of the trouble areas were young people who blamed their elders for the predicament in which the ghetto found itself. It further noted that no program would be successful without the support of the younger generation. For this reason, the Commission continued, "Progress will only be made in the solution of ghetto problems if there is effective communication between ghetto residents and the city government, improved ability of the city government to respond to the needs and problems of the ghetto residents, and expanded opportunities for indigenous leadership to participate in shaping decisions and policies which affect their community."<sup>18</sup> One way to achieve effective communication, according to the Commission, is to encourage the establishment of community organizations which would act as influential representatives of ghetto residents before local public bodies. Another method designed to diminish the frustrations of ghetto residents is the formation of a permanent commission to examine continuously the needs of ghetto areas, the methods used to meet the needs, and the effectiveness of the solutions. The proposed commission is to be composed

<sup>17</sup> Marilyn Gittell, "Problems of School Decentralization in New York City," The Urban Review, 2 (February 1967), 28.

<sup>18</sup> Report of the Chicago Riot Study Committee to the Honorable Richard J. Daley (Chicago, 1968), p. 64.





of both general and community representatives, all appointed by the Mayor, and is to have a full-time salaried Negro executive director.<sup>19</sup>

Project Proposal for Washington, D.C.

The new Fort Lincoln Project--a "new town intown" in Washington, D.C.--has produced suggestions for decentralization of large city government. Even though Washington is a special case as a municipality, the suggestions may have implications for other large cities. Henry Bain, senior staff member of the Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies, which served as consultants to the planners of the Fort Lincoln Project, feels that the most important criterion to be weighed in organizing the new town government should be self-determination within a general citywide development framework. Citizens should have substantial control over the more important institutions, such as schools and police, and command sufficient resources to deliver the kinds of services required. The town would be developed by a private community development corporation, which would provide both private and governmental services until the process of development is completed. Then, suggests Mr. Bain, a borough could be established to handle municipal-type functions delegated to it by the District of Columbia. The borough would be governed by a council which would appoint a chief executive, have the power to set the tax rate used to furnish services not provided by the larger government, and advise the District of the community's needs. A "little city hall" located in the area would contain field offices of various city departments and political and civic organizations. The borough would also administer the local elementary schools and provide advice about junior high and senior high schools used by residents of the area.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 113.





### Decentralization Activities by New York City Government

The New York City government has tried or discussed several types of decentralization, beginning with a borough system in the late nineteenth century. The boroughs are still intact but they are so large and have so little power that they do not provide much access to the city government for borough residents. In 1950, the New York City Planning Commission divided the entire city into sixty-six planning districts designed to be units for the placement of public facilities and community development. Each district was provided with a community planning council (later renamed board), its members appointed by the borough president with the advice of the community. The purposes set out for these councils were to advise the borough presidents on any problems dealing with community development and to help involve the citizen in local community planning. At present, all boroughs are divided into districts, but the number in each borough varies as does the size of the population included, the method used for determining boundaries, and the size of the boards.

A thorough study of the community planning boards found that they have achieved only negligible success because of lack of direction and official backing, little citizen understanding or support, and inadequate explanation of the functions with which they should be concerned. Planning proposals of city departments often have not been referred to the boards and board members have not been very knowledgeable about the programs of city administrative departments concerned with community development.<sup>20</sup> The primary function of the boards seems to be education of the members; many of them feel their effect on decision-making has been negligible. Proposals for strengthening the boards have included making them advisory

<sup>20</sup> Martin Dworkis (ed.), The Community Planning Boards of New York (New York: New York University, Graduate School of Public Administration, 1961), pp. 106-107.



to the City Planning Commission, the city administrator, or the mayor, maintaining them in the office of the borough president but removing restrictions as to the problems they may consider, and referring to them all matters requiring public hearings before such matters are given final determination.

Mayor John Lindsay has proposed another decentralization move, which would involve the establishment of approximately thirty neighborhood city halls; to date, five of them have been opened. Because the City Council has refused to authorize funds for their operation, they are largely maintained by private donations of money and labor. Each one has a full-time director who is paid by the city, but other personnel is volunteer and work on a part-time basis. The staff is responsible for hearing complaints, referring them to appropriate agencies, and making certain action has been taken. It also provides other information needed by community residents and helps to coordinate the operations of city agencies working in the local area. Another Lindsay proposal would have established community service centers in the neighborhoods as extensions of the mayor's office. Each councilmanic district would have had a center to provide information and referral service, to receive and follow up complaints of the citizens, and to act as liaison between the community and its elected officials. This plan was rejected by the City Council. Subsequently, however, two city councilmen, at their own expense, set up local offices staffed by volunteers to hear citizen grievances. Other councilmen are contemplating such offices.

#### Developments in Two California Communities

Recent actions to bring government closer to the people have been made in two California communities. The first took place in East Palo Alto, an unincorporated area in San Mateo County. Residents of the area, which is very densely populated, mostly by nonwhites, wanted to have a





strong voice in public affairs affecting them. Expressions of this desire resulted in the creation of the East Palo Alto Municipal Council by resolution of the Board of Supervisors of San Mateo County in July, 1967. Set up as an advisory body to deal with such matters as public safety, welfare, public works, and planning, the Council has coordinated the preparation of an application for a Model Cities planning grant, made recommendations on storm drainage and road projects, considered various proposals, including those for zone changes, traffic signs and street lights, and selected, upon request, local representatives to a number of county-wide organizations. The county board of supervisors has established the practice of not making decisions bearing on East Palo Alto before action is taken by the Municipal Council. The county board has consistently approved the Council's requests and recommendations. The Council consists of five members, one elected from each of five districts, and is aided by the full-time services of an executive assistant to the county manager and a secretary.<sup>21</sup>

The second development, apparently even more recent than the first, involves the creation of the position of Neighborman in Stockton. Two individuals were hired by the city after being screened by a broadly representative citizens group. These neighbors are not assigned to any particular area but work in those locations in the city where their services are most required. Their offices are located in the city hall, not in particular sections of the city. Their assignment is to determine community needs and decide upon the actions best suited to satisfy them.

#### REFORM EFFORTS IN LOS ANGELES

Dissatisfaction with the existing system in Los Angeles has taken various forms. Two long standing, frequently suggested proposals for reform are (1) secession of different localities from the City of Los

<sup>21</sup> Based on information furnished by Randy H. Hamilton, Executive Director, Institute for Local Self Government, Berkeley, August 9, 1968.





Angeles and (2) formation of boroughs as entities within the Los Angeles city government. Advocacy of the former has sometimes preceded the proposing of the latter, and they may be appropriately discussed together.

### Early Interest in Boroughs

The first serious consideration of the borough idea in the City of Los Angeles developed in 1909.<sup>22</sup> In that year residents of the cities of San Pedro and Wilmington were to vote on the question of consolidating with Los Angeles. To assure their residents that they would retain considerable local <sup>SELF</sup> government, the charter of Los Angeles was amended to specify the means for setting up a borough system for them. The amendment called for a borough, except as otherwise provided in the charter, to have the powers and duties of a sixth-class city (a prevalent type of general-law municipality in the state) and to be governed by an elected board of trustees.

The consolidation elections were successful, thus bringing into Los Angeles an area later developed into a major harbor, but San Pedro and Wilmington did not acquire borough status. In 1913 the Los Angeles City Council refused to act on a petition by Wilmington residents for the establishment of a borough government. Four years later the California Supreme Court ruled the charter's borough provisions to be void. It reasoned that the existing state constitutional sections necessitated the division of an entire city into boroughs, whereas the charter limited their formation to territory "hereafter annexed."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> The borough plan also has been recommended from time to time (initially in 1906) as a central feature of a proposed consolidated government to encompass much or all of Los Angeles County, including the City of Los Angeles. Such proposals are not centrally related to this report and therefore are not considered in it.

<sup>23</sup> The borough provisions in the city charter and the state constitution subsequently have undergone changes. However, the present charter sections about boroughs, in the opinion of both the State Legislative Counsel and the Los Angeles City Attorney, are invalid; in their judgment, the sections were not validated by the current state constitutional amendment, passed in 1952, which allows boroughs to be established in all or part of a city. Los Angeles City Attorney's Opinion to L. E. Timberlake, December 18, 1956.



### Support for Secession

There has been continuing but sporadic interest in borough government in various parts of the city since the end of the Second World War, and along with this revival have come intermittent outcries from many sections in support of secession. In the immediate post-war years many partly developed and agricultural areas in the city, particularly in the San Fernando Valley, Westchester, and West Los Angeles, were subdivided for residential purposes and quickly became heavily populated. For the first time, the city was confronted with retaining the many areas it had absorbed over a span of about four decades. Discontent arose in a number of localities from the failure by the city to act promptly on matters such as zoning, parking, and traffic, and the building of public facilities. Because of their inability to get satisfaction on local community demands, various local groups, chiefly in the San Fernando and Harbor areas, advocated secession from the city.<sup>24</sup>

### Renewed Interest in Boroughs

The borough idea, which had received little attention since the early years of this century, was revived by Mayor Fletcher Bowron in 1948 as a response to the advocacy for secession. He proposed the formation of five boroughs within the city: San Fernando, Hollywood, West Los Angeles, Central, and Harbor. Each would have had a locally-elected policy board authorized to locate and improve secondary streets, determine the routes and procedures for garbage collection, locate stops for buses and street

<sup>24</sup> The principal source of information about many of the borough and secession efforts discussed here is Winston W. Crouch and Beatrice Dinerman, Southern California Metropolis (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), pp. 165-169. Also useful on borough plans for Los Angeles are Edwin A. Cottrell and Helen L. Jones, Characteristics of the Metropolis (Los Angeles: Haynes Foundation, 1952), 71-72, 79-81, 104-105, 108-109, and Assembly Interim Committee on State and Local Taxation, The Borough System of Government for Metropolitan Areas (Sacramento: 1951), pp. 60-68.





cars, handle local zoning, and set the borough tax rate. No charter amendment incorporating these recommendations was placed on the ballot, although for several years organizations in the Valley and Westchester tried to build support for the borough concept. In addition, Vincent Thomas, the Assemblyman from the San Pedro-Wilmington area, successfully spearheaded a movement in 1952 to amend the state constitution to allow a city to provide in its charter for the establishment of boroughs in either part or all of its territory.

In the same year as the adoption of the Thomas amendment, Mayor Bowron presented a more detailed borough plan than his proposal of four years before. He recommended amending the charter to enable any area in Los Angeles to form a borough government with an elective board empowered to levy taxes to finance local services. Some services would supplement those available from the city government; others would be unique to the borough. The plan also provided for the decentralization of certain city departments, including police and fire; in such activities borough officials would direct the units situated in their area, with city department heads providing general supervision and coordination.

#### Revived Advocacy of Secession

Advocacy of secession developed once more in the 1960's. In the first half of the decade, support for it emerged in Westwood over zoning changes permitting high-rise apartments and office buildings, in Pacific Palisades over unhappiness about the level of police protection, and in the San Fernando Valley over services and taxes in general. An abortive effort got under way to detach parts of the Valley from both Los Angeles City and County and organize it into a borough system. Also, following the Watts riots of August, 1965, a militant organization in the area proposed the separation of Watts and its environs from Los Angeles, adjacent cities,





and unincorporated land in order to form a new municipality, "Freedom City."<sup>25</sup> At about the same time, a consultant to the Governor's Commission on the Los Angeles Riots (the McCone Commission) recommended the establishment of a borough in the Watts section of Los Angeles, but the recommendation was not included in the Commission's public report (Violence in the City--An End or a Beginning?).

#### Recent Interest in Boroughs

Interest in the borough idea also emerged again in the 1960's. In December, 1964, the Charter and Administrative Code Committee of the City Council recommended the submission of a charter amendment to permit the establishment of boroughs in part or all of Los Angeles. At a meeting of the Council in the same month the proposed amendment was altered to allow boroughs to be established only on a citywide basis, and the proposal was referred to the City Attorney for his opinion on its legality. The City Attorney's judgment was that a charter provision requiring the establishment of boroughs in all parts of the city <sup>if *they were to be* established</sup> at all would be upheld by the courts. However, he also pointed out that a reasonable and feasible procedure to achieve the purpose of the amendment did not exist in the charter, a deficiency that would require further amendments for correction.<sup>26</sup> The proposed amendment was shortly withdrawn from Council consideration and sent back to the Charter and Administrative Code Committee, where it assumed inactive status.

Two years later, in January, 1967, Councilman Thomas Shepard introduced a motion to have the Charter and Administrative Code Committee again explore the advisability of placing a borough charter amendment on

<sup>25</sup> Secession of a heavily populated area from a city, it should be noted, is a difficult process. Voters of both the area of the proposed secession and those of the rest of the city must separately favor the proposition.

<sup>26</sup> Los Angeles City Attorney's Opinion to the Charter and Administrative Code Committee of the Los Angeles City Council, December 24, 1964.



the ballot. The Committee recommended the submission to the voters of such an amendment, which would enable the organization of boroughs in part or all of the city and the selection of borough board members through election. The Council turned down the Committee's recommendation in late February, 1967, thus keeping it from being placed before the voters.

Espousal of the borough idea came full circle in 1968, when support again emanated from its place of origin of almost sixty years ago. In August of this year Councilman John S. Gibson, Jr. of the San Pedro-Wilmington area proposed amending the charter to make it legally possible for the various portions of the city, at their individual discretion, to organize boroughs, which would be governed by elective boards. In making his motion, Mr. Gibson stated a number of reasons in support of it:

- (1) The City has an area of more than 460 square miles, with its southern boundary approximately fifty miles distant from its northern boundary.
- (2) Its population of nearly 3 million is composed of many communities with different social, financial, and ethnic groups.
- (3) There is increasing need to establish a form of local government exercising jurisdiction over purely local matters which may be important to only one district in the City and do not concern the City as a whole.
- (4) There appears to be increasing interest of citizens to become a part of a decision-making body concerning problems and needs relating to their communities.
- (5) A borough system would enable various sections of the City to have more say as to how locally-collected taxes should be spent with respect to local improvements and level of services.
- (6) Provision for a borough form of government was made in the city charter of 1925, but was invalidated by a later amendment to the State Constitution.

Councilman Gibson's motion, seconded by Councilman Shepard, was referred to the Charter and Administrative Code Committee, which transmitted the Council file on borough proposals to the City Administrative Officer for a report.





### Special Council Grievance Committee

Councilman Thomas Bradley suggested another means of reducing dissatisfaction with the existing system in July, 1968. He proposed the formation of a special council committee of rotating membership to convene every Saturday morning. Its purposes would be "to improve lines of communication with the public at large and to provide an official body which would serve as a means of people expressing grievances, making suggestions and receiving explanations to their questions."<sup>27</sup> The Council's Governmental Efficiency Committee, to which the proposal was referred, concluded that grievances could be dealt with more effectively within councilmanic districts and problems could be handled more easily by whatever means the district councilman felt most appropriate. On the Committee's recommendation, the Council in late August unanimously defeated the measure (Mr. Bradley was out of the city).

### School Proposals and Action

The Los Angeles school system, which includes all of the City of Los Angeles and extends a considerable distance beyond its boundaries, has also experienced discontent. A number of approaches to the problem have been suggested. Three of them are reflected in bills introduced, but not enacted, in the 1968 session of the State Legislature; to a degree, they resemble proposals for secession or a borough arrangement made at other times for the Los Angeles city government. A bill by Assemblymen Wakefield and Burke (A.B. 505) would have facilitated the withdrawal of areas from the Los Angeles City School District. A measure by Senator Harmer and Assemblyman Greene (S.B. 276) provided for the completion by January 1, 1970, of a study, to be undertaken by the augmented county committee

<sup>27</sup> Council motion by Thomas Bradley, July 11, 1968.





on school district organization, of the orderly division of the Los Angeles school system into smaller unified school districts.

The objective of legislation proposed by Senator Wedworth, on the other hand, was decentralization, not separation. It would have required the governing board of a unified school district with more than 400,000 pupils in average daily attendance (Los Angeles is the only one in the state of this size) to establish at least ten administrative areas, each governed by an elected board of school trustees. The governing board of the Los Angeles district would delegate to the area trustees "those powers, duties, and responsibilities relating to curriculum, courses of study, pupil conduct, and pupil personnel matters[but not teacher personnel affairs, for example] that in the governing board's discretion may be best administered by the administrative area board of trustees."<sup>28</sup> In addition, the governing board of the Los Angeles district, with the concurrence of the area board of trustees, would appoint an administrative area superintendent of schools, and centralized services, such as purchasing, would be made available to each administrative area. In short, the Wedworth proposal called for the organization of a Los Angeles school borough plan.

To deal with dissatisfaction, the Los Angeles school district has taken various actions in recent years, two of which deserve mention here. In 1965 a decentralization move, which had been recommended by consultants five years earlier, increased the number of administrative areas from six (all elementary) to twelve (eight elementary and four secondary). An assistant superintendent is located in each area, but determining their exact roles has proved difficult, as has been noted by the new deputy superintendent of instruction: "We have a long way to go in defining their responsibilities and . . . in

<sup>28</sup> Senate Bill No. 1172 (1968). Under this proposal the establishment of administrative areas in unified school districts containing between 60,000 and 400,000 pupils in average daily attendance would have been permitted but not required.



releasing authority to them."<sup>29</sup> In 1967 the district opened four curriculum development centers in its south central and southern portions to satisfy better the educational needs of students from these disadvantaged sections.

#### A Federation of Private Groups

The recent formation of the Council for Planning and Conservation, which is an association of private organizations and individuals, is additional evidence of dissatisfaction with the relations between citizens and government and the desire for governmental change. Established in August, 1967, the Council performs several important functions. It serves as a clearing house for information, gives inexperienced constituent groups ready access to the advice and assistance of other member organizations, and provides a center through which word of new threats to hills, parks, beaches, and other elements of the environment may be communicated rapidly. In a sense, the Council is a self-help agency. It shows its members, who are concerned about planning and conservation affairs and issues, how to proceed through the governmental labyrinth to get thenecessary information and to discover who is responsible for specific public actions or inactions.

The Council now contains approximately twenty organizations; this represents a doubling in number in little more than a year and shows a strong, continuing need for this kind of operation. The member agencies are located in various parts of the Southern California region, from north of Malibu to Newport Beach on the south; many of them are situated in Los Angeles. As a result of their participation in the Council, many member organizations that previously had been concerned with only a single public issue or activity as it affected their own locale have developed a broader

<sup>29</sup> Los Angeles Times, October 21, 1968, part 2, p. 1.





geographical view of their problem and have also become cognizant of its relation to other public affairs.<sup>30</sup>

#### THE PROBLEM OF DETERMINING COMMUNITIES IN LOS ANGELES

Do communities exist in Los Angeles that could be used as building blocks or sub-units to foster improvement in communication and interaction between the citizens and their city government? If they are present, are they well-defined communities with precise boundaries? Or if they are defined or exist in only an imprecise, generalized way, can they be delimited on the basis of boundaries employed for other governmental or non-governmental purposes?

The existence of communities is widely recognized, but there is great disagreement over their exact boundaries. In fact, every effort to specify their limits has generated considerable quarrelling. The controversial nature of attempts at such boundary-setting has been repeatedly demonstrated; two examples are presented here.

To facilitate the presentation of statistical data, the Department of City Planning in the 1940's divided the city into sixty areas, which it called "communities." In time, much controversy crystallized in various sections over the boundaries of these "communities," the contention being that they did not represent communities as conceived by private organizations and individuals. Although these demarcations were made solely for purposes of supplying information on a less than citywide basis, the quarrel over them became so extensive that they were renamed "statistical areas" in 1961.

The community-name sign program of the Department of Traffic, which

<sup>30</sup> Frank Tyson of the University of Southern California kindly discussed the development of the Council with the author and made a number of manuscript pages about it available to him.



involves the erection of blue signs bearing a place name and the City seal, was started in 1960; very few were installed, however, until four years later due to repeated conflicts over boundaries between neighboring localities. Disagreements of recent years have included those between Canoga Park and Winnetka, Woodland Hills and East Woodland Hills, and Sepulveda and Panorama City. In the last named dispute, Sepulveda successfully protested the installation of Panorama City signs which had placed a park paid for by Sepulveda residents within the "territorial limits" of the latter community.

### City Field Service Areas

Many departments and departmental bureaus in the Los Angeles city government have field service areas. This development, which began in 1909 and has had its greatest expansion in the last quarter century, deserves consideration since conceivably it might give some indications about the boundaries of communities.

The number of districts varies widely among departments (see Table 1). Some have as few as two, three, or five (the last named being the most frequent), while others have more than fifteen districts or subdistricts. Obviously departments <sup>with</sup> ~~have~~ different numbers of field areas do not have coterminous district boundaries. Even when departments contain the same number of field areas their district limits are seldom the same. Also, combinations of districts in departments having many of them do not produce boundaries approximating or identical to those of departments possessing fewer districts. Clearly, each department in determining its field areas has made its own decisions without reference to those of other city agencies.

The pattern of field service areas of the Los Angeles city government provides no aid to community boundary-setting. This is not particularly surprising since the construction of field districts has been based





Table I

## Field Service Districts of the Los Angeles City Government

Department (Bureau)	Number of major divisions (Number of subdivisions)
Animal regulation	5 districts
Building and safety	5 districts
City clerk Tax and permit	5 areas
Fire	3 divisions 19 battalions
Library	7 regions 54 branches
Police	16 divisions
Public works	
Contract administration	2 divisions 10 districts
Engineering	7 districts
Public buildings	3 districts
Sanitation	6 refuse collection districts
Street lighting	2 districts
Street maintenance	6 areas 24 districts
Recreation and parks	5 districts
Traffic	5 districts
Water and power	6 underground districts 10 overhead districts

Based on information supplied by respective departments in July and August, 1968. The remaining departments do not have field service districts, although some of them, such as the City Attorney and Planning, have branch offices. Sanitation also has sewer maintenance and industrial waste control districts.



on an engineering and systems point of view: there is a job to be done and personnel and equipment need to be distributed efficiently to accomplish the work. More effective administrative organization, which is designed to serve the public better, is the objective; with this aim in mind, no departmental effort has been made to consider possible community boundaries in drawing up field districts.

### City Statistical Areas

The Department of City Planning has made two types of areal breakdowns of the city for its work purposes. The first type, called "statistical areas," is employed to present statistical data in a meaningful and useful fashion. The second series of areas, designated by the Department as "planning study districts and communities," is used for the preparation of detailed local master plans.

Statistical areas consist of groupings of census tracts. Virtually every area contains a recognized business center and bears its name (Van Nuys, Westwood, and San Pedro, for example). In the few instances where no recognized center existed at the time these divisions were made, the area was given the name of a prominent street (South Vermont) or a natural feature (Baldwin Hills).

There are currently 65 statistical areas; 30 in Central Los Angeles, 18 in the San Fernando Valley, 12 in Western Los Angeles, and 5 in Southern Los Angeles (See Figure 1 and Table 2). They range in estimated population from Porter Ranch with 1,400 people to Hollywood with approximately 150,000 inhabitants. More than one-half of them have fewer than 40,000 residents. The population distribution of the areas is as follows:

Up to 10,000	3	50,000-60,000	8
10,000-20,000	10	60,000-70,000	5
20,000-30,000	11	70,000-80,000	5
30,000-40,000	10	80,000-90,000	2
40,000-50,000	7	90,000-100,000	1
		More than 100,000	3





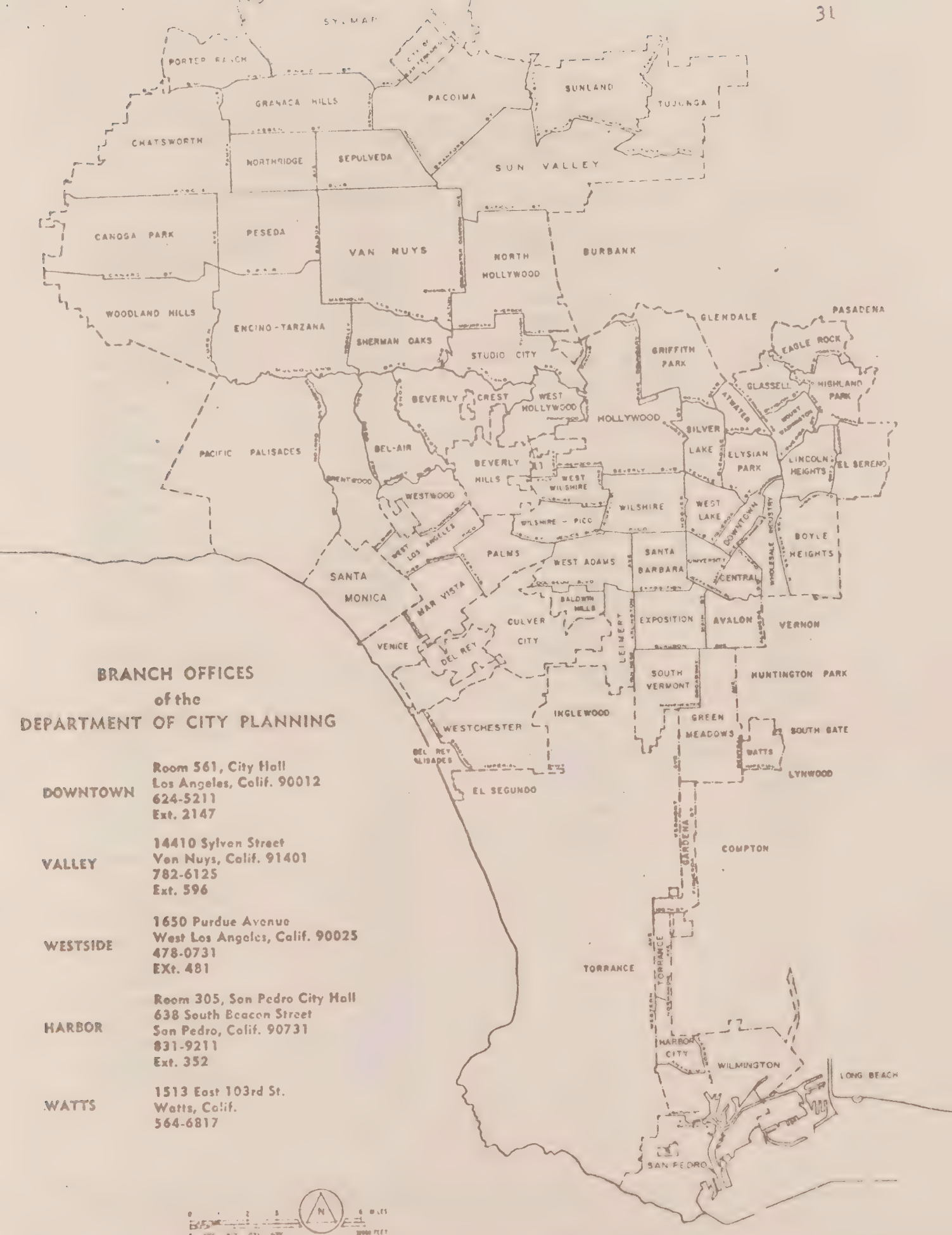


Figure 1. Statistical Areas of Los Angeles, 1968



Table 2

**Statistical Areas of Los Angeles:  
Regional Location, Name, and Estimated Population  
As Of April 1, 1968**

Areas, by Regions	Population	Areas, by Regions	Population
<u>San Fernando Valley</u>		<u>Central Los Angeles</u>	
Canoga Park	89,420	University	23,781
Chatsworth	39,747	Watts	34,412
Encino-Tarzana	49,636	West Adams	72,933
Granada Hills	57,813	West Hollywood	22,907
North Hollywood	118,255	Westlake	41,332
Northridge	32,169	West Wilshire	62,271
Pacoima	77,569	Wholesale Industry	12,721
Porter Ranch	1,400	Wilshire	88,505
Reseda	74,854	Wilshire-West Pico	50,507
Sepulveda	53,205		
Sherman Oaks	36,831	<u>Western Los Angeles</u>	
Studio City	33,139	Bel-Air	8,772
Sunland	22,673	Beverly Crest	10,255
Sun Valley	53,445	Brentwood	28,348
Sylmar	50,450	Del Rey	27,476
Tujunga	20,930	Del Rey Palisades	5,338
Van Nuys	146,873	Mar Vista	62,546
Woodland Hills	43,620	Pacific Palisades	27,672
		Palms	55,570
<u>Central Los Angeles</u>		Venice	40,900
Atwater	11,377	Westchester	55,693
Avalon	51,344	West Los Angeles	42,065
Baldwin Hills	26,529	Westwood	37,365
Boyle Heights	82,718		
Central	19,742	<u>Southern Los Angeles</u>	
Downtown	12,459	Gardena	15,896
Eagle Rock	21,281	Harbor City	10,465
El Sereno	32,775	San Pedro	66,031
Elysian Park	24,566	Torrance	11,701
Exposition Park	70,525	Wilmington	39,907
Glassell	21,147		
Green Meadows	96,760		
Griffith Park	11,953		
Highland Park	37,968		
Hollywood	149,869		
Leimert	45,047		
Lincoln Heights	31,318		
Mt. Washington	16,828		
Santa Barbara	65,353		
Silver Lake	44,171		
South Vermont	65,746		

Source: Department of City Planning, Los Angeles





Most of their boundaries have not been altered since they were marked out in the 1940's. Several changes were made in the San Fernando Valley following the special census of 1956, when statistical areas were set up for Granada Hills, Sherman Oaks, Studio City, and Sylmar. Also, a statistical area was organized for Porter Ranch after its annexation to the city in 1965.

The statistical areas have proven valuable for the presentation of various kinds of information; in fact, they represent the only geographical breakdown for most citywide data collected by the city government. Much census information for both 1950 and 1960 was mapped and tabulated according to these areas. The semi-annual population and housing estimates of the Department of City Planning, as well as its recent population projections to the year 2000, are also presented on such an area basis. However, in comparing these statistical areas with major areal divisions in the city delineated for a variety of purposes by other agencies, either public or private, one difference stands out. The total number of these statistical areas is much greater.

#### City Planning Study Districts and Communities

The first employment of "planning study districts and communities," the Department of City Planning's second type of areal breakdown, came in the mid-1950's, when planning studies were started for the San Fernando Valley. Twenty-one planning areas were established there; their demarcation permitted convenient mapping and map reproduction. The original planning areas were called "districts," but now most of them are identified as "communities," with the earlier term being reserved as the designation for areas made up of two or more "communities."

As in the case of most statistical areas, a planning community usually



contains an established business center and carries its name. In most instances a statistical area and a planning community include the same center and have identical names, but their boundaries almost always differ. Sometimes, however, the boundaries of a planning area are coterminous with those of a group of statistical areas; this is true of the Wilshire Corridor, for example. The boundaries of planning areas usually follow major or secondary highways, railroads, flood channels, freeways, or other natural physical or developmental features.

So far forty-seven planning communities and districts, including three urban renewal project areas, have been designated. Planning studies have been completed in twenty-five of them and are under way in another eleven.

There is a feeling in the Department that the two types of areal breakdowns, statistical areas and planning communities, should be revised to coincide whenever feasible, thus permitting much more thorough and meaningful use to be made of data from the forthcoming decennial census. This could be done in the San Fernando Valley when a program of review and restudy of local master plans is begun in 1969; it could be carried out in other sections of the city before the official adoption of plans now in preparation. However, in view of past experience, according to a departmental staff member, any attempts at boundary revision will probably encounter considerable controversy.

#### City Branch Administrative Centers

The City of Los Angeles has also developed a series of branch administrative centers. Their purpose is to enable many citizens to travel a much shorter distance from their place of residence or work to transact most ordinary public business than would be possible if they had to go to City Hall or, in some instances, the main offices of another government.





In 1950 the Department of City Planning issued a master plan on this subject, which called for the establishment of nine major centers and three minor centers. Each of the former was to include a municipal building that housed branch offices of many city departments and its immediate service area was to be a three-mile radius. Each of the latter was to have separate buildings for individual agencies grouped on a single site and its immediate service area was to be a two-mile radius. In devising the plan, the Department did not prepare an overlay grid of departmental field areas. As Winston Crouch and Beatrice Dinerman have pointed out, "City planners had witnessed the county's difficulty in comparing and reconciling the many departmental service boundaries, and concluded that any attempt to utilize a superimposed grid of administrative boundaries was likely to be unsatisfactory."<sup>31</sup> The plan was not submitted for formal approval by the City Planning Commission or the City Council and has never become an official part of the city's general plan. It has been used, however, as a guide for some decisions concerning branch centers.

The plan proposed the establishment of centers in Van Nuys, Hollywood, West Los Angeles, Venice, San Pedro, Canoga Park, Sunland-Tujunga, Jefferson, Watts, North Hollywood, Eagle Rock, and Westchester. Twelve centers are in existence; most but not all of them are in the localities specified in the plan of 1950. A Jefferson center, which would serve West Jefferson, West Adams, and Leimert Park, has not been established, and the Canoga Park Center has only those buildings located there in 1950. The proposed site in Canoga Park was not developed and was replaced in 1953 by the West Valley Center in Reseda. The centers differ appreciably in the number of city departments (and county, state, and federal agencies) they house. Some

<sup>31</sup> Winston W. Crouch and Beatrice Dinerman, Southern California Metropolis (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), p. 304. Some departments use a branch administrative center as the office location for their field service operations, but many have established their own field facilities.



consist of only a modest building or two; some others are elaborate, with the most extensive being the Valley Administrative Center in Van Nuys.

Branch administrative centers do not have formal boundaries, and citizens may go to any specific ones, depending on their own desires. Rather than boundaries, these centers may be said to have territorial spheres of influence, which have limited value for any effort to determine the boundaries of communities. There is another limiting factor. The administrative centers plan was devised within the framework of utilizing existing buildings wherever appropriate. The judgment was that suitable structures were available in eight proposed centers. In some instances the use of these sites made their territorial spheres of influence different from what they would have been had they been decided on the basis of the best location. This further weakens the usefulness of employing spheres of influence in community boundary setting.

#### Councilmanic Redistricting

Each of the fifteen members of the Los Angeles City Council is elected from a separate district, and it is therefore worth inquiring as to whether councilmanic district lines might be an aid in the determination of community boundaries. The councilmanic redistricting procedure has remained basically the same since the present charter went into effect in 1925; the districts are determined on the basis of registered voters and redistricting takes place every four years. From the beginning the districts were to be as nearly equal in number of voters as practicable and to be bounded, where possible, by natural boundaries or street lines. A charter amendment of 1963 added more exacting guides: districts were not to deviate in number of voters by more than 10 percent above or one-fifteenth below the total number of registered voters in the city.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Los Angeles City Charter, Article II, Sec. 6(2)(a).





An analysis of councilmanic redistricting since 1940 reveals that great changes have been made in district boundaries. At the start of this period all of the Los Angeles portion of the San Fernando Valley was in a single council district. Today, following a tremendous increase in number of registered voters in that vast amount of land, six districts, in whole or in part, are located there. Changes, many of them substantial, have materialized during this time in all districts except the Fifteenth (the Harbor area). The Santa Monica Mountains are no longer used as a boundary line; Districts Two and Eleven are now on both sides of them. Over the years the Eleventh District has been shifted northward considerably, while many others have been moved westward. In 1964 the boundaries of the Twelfth District were completely altered; it was transplanted from central Los Angeles to the northwest corner of the Valley. In 1940, eleven districts were situated east of Hollywood and Baldwin Hills; the total has declined to seven.

Councilmanic district lines are not presently of value in the search for locating the boundaries of communities. Although to a degree councilmanic redistricting reflects population shifts (and some of these shifts in turn produce new communities), the basic current criterion of the redistricting process is registered voters and not population. The latter, however, is a widely accepted determinant of communities whereas the former never has been so regarded. Also, the proportion of the citywide total of registered voters in a district may differ considerably from the proportion of the total population living there; often this is particularly evident in districts possessing a large racial or ethnic minority population. In August, 1968, a court suit (Calderone, Pratt, and Walters v. City of Los Angeles) was filed to compel the apportionment of councilmanic districts



in Los Angeles on the basis of population.<sup>33</sup>

Even if the Calderone suit is successful, major limitations will still exist on the usefulness of this type of boundary setting in delineating communities. First, the total city area and population must be placed in fifteen council districts, and this total may bear little, if any, relationship to the number of communities. Second, council redistricting is inherently a political act in which political considerations must rank high.<sup>34</sup>

### County Areal Divisions

The County of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Unified School District both include all the territory of the City of Los Angeles and utilize areal divisions that include city land. The Regional Planning Commission of Los Angeles County, for instance, has established a large number of statistical areas in the county, thirty-seven of which are in Los Angeles. The number set up in the city by the county is less than three-fifths as many as created in Los Angeles by the Los Angeles city government. Moreover, combining the city's statistical areas seldom produces the same boundaries as those of the county's areas.

### School Administrative Areas

The local school district has divided its territory into eight elementary administrative areas and four secondary administrative areas and has located an assistant superintendent and staff assistants in each of them. The eight elementary areas are identified as East, Harbor, North, South,

<sup>33</sup> A similar suit to require the use of population rather than registered voters in drawing up aldermanic (councilmanic) districts in St. Louis was filed in July, 1968. In September of the same year a federal district court ordered the redistricting of aldermanic wards in Chicago on an equal-population basis.

<sup>34</sup> Congressional, state senate, and state assembly districts, all based on population, are also located in varying numbers in Los Angeles. They, too, are the product of political decisions and offer no clues to community boundaries. In addition, some of them traverse the city's limits and several congressional districts that are partly in the city cross county lines.





Valley-East, Valley-North, Valley-West, and West. The four secondary divisions are designated simply as A, B, C, and D. The school district is considerably larger in territory than the City of Los Angeles, and consequently each administrative area is very sizable. Three of the elementary areas include territory that is not within Los Angeles, and one of the three, the South Elementary Area, consists of non-contiguous land since Inglewood, which has a separate school system, is situated between its eastern and western portions. Furthermore, not one of the secondary areas is a combination of the entire territory of two or more elementary areas. Every secondary area cuts through the territory of at least one elementary area.

#### Private Efforts

Various private organizations have also undertaken studies that mark out areal divisions of the city. The most ambitious, continuing effort along this line has been carried out by the Welfare Planning Council, Los Angeles Region, in its publication, Background for Planning, which is a basic source book to aid in the orderly planning of services in Los Angeles County, particularly in the health, welfare, and recreation fields. The fourth edition of this study, published in 1963 and utilizing data from the 1960 Census of Population and Housing, divides Los Angeles County into 134 study areas which vary considerably in population. Fifty-six of these areas are located wholly within Los Angeles and eight others are situated partly within it.

Each study area is made up of a group of census tracts. The criteria employed for determining the boundaries of study areas were, in order of importance, homogeneity, municipal and physical boundaries, and comparability with geographical units recognized by other agencies in the county. Homogeneity is emphasized so that a study area would contain a like population which might be expected to have similar needs and require comparable



public services. The four characteristics employed to determine homogeneity were average rent, racial composition, marital status, and age composition of the population.

This report by the Welfare Planning Council is an example of painstaking research. Two matters about it, however, should be pointed out in relation to the search for help in delineating the boundaries of communities. First, as is so evident in other studies that make areal divisions of the city, the number of such areas in this report is not the same as that decided upon in any other study. Second, and even more important, the study areas of this report are demarcated primarily on the basis of the homogeneity of the population. Although such a criterion is appropriately used for the objectives of the analysis made by the Welfare Planning Council, it greatly reduces the utility of the study areas as possible aids in determining community boundaries.

Finally, it should be said that local organizations, such as chambers of commerce, civic groups, and residential protective associations, frequently set out their own versions of what are the boundaries of their communities. In most cases these are overly ambitious statements, which produce overlapping boundary claims by neighboring localities. In some other instances the persons preparing the statement of boundaries purposely exclude areas which they consider undesirable.

### A General Appraisal

Several conclusions may be made about communities in Los Angeles. First, a citywide pattern of well-defined communities with distinct boundaries does not currently exist. To the contrary, considerable controversy is present in a number of instances over the dividing line between communities; there is even disagreement over whether certain





"communities" are separate or actually parts of larger communities. Second, the various uses made of areal divisions of the city, which have just been discussed, do not furnish much assistance in deciding upon the exact territorial limits of communities. Third, despite the fact that the identification of communities for any purpose was seldom the stated objective of the projects using areal divisions, one does derive from a study of them a highly impressionistic view that communities do exist, but often imprecisely and seemingly at times in only an embryonic form.

The quest for a means of improving the Los Angeles city government will not be found at the present time in a search for finding neatly compartmentalized communities below the citywide level that together embrace all the city's territory. Instead, a new process should be developed, and it is to this vital matter that we now turn our attention.

#### A NEW NEIGHBORHOOD PROCESS AND INSTITUTION

There is a strongly demonstrated need for better channels of communication and interaction between the citizens of Los Angeles and their city government. On the one hand, many people (some but not all from racial and ethnic minorities) either do not know what means of communication and participation exist or they do not understand how to use them. On the other hand, the city government generally follows long established procedures and operates through highly compartmentalized departments that individually often deal with only a part of an activity.

Los Angeles has one of the largest city populations and areas in the world, and the meaningful involvement of its citizenry is a basic and great challenge. City personnel has not ignored the problem and has instituted various efforts to make the city government more



personalized and responsive. Branch administrative centers and departmental field areas, which were discussed earlier, are designed to bring services geographically closer to the public and to make them available on a more efficient basis. There are also field deputies of councilmen and staff assistants to the Mayor, who receive constituents' complaints and take them up with the relevant departments. In addition, private individuals have formed groups interested in planning, conservation, and other worthwhile objectives, and have even brought some of them together in a federation, to increase their knowledge of and accessibility to the city government. These private organizational endeavors, however, have been part-time and incomplete. All these activities contribute to increasing the personalization of the Los Angeles government, but more is necessary. In brief, a new process should be injected into the existing city governmental system to strengthen it.

In meeting the need, the splintering of the large city government into small, autonomous units should be avoided. The dismantling of a large government is the quick answer of a number of people to the problem, but in total its detrimental effects would far outweigh its possible benefits. A large city government has certain advantages, including a broad resource base and an extensive reservoir of expertness; they should not be dismissed unless a basic value cannot be satisfied without atomizing the unit. The basic value under consideration--the meaningful involvement of the citizens of Los Angeles in city affairs--can be satisfied within the framework of the existing city government. The best of both possible worlds--the large and the small--are attainable.

The problem can be significantly dealt with by establishing a new type of public organization at the neighborhood level as part of the city government. To be vital and effective, this organization should





be truly "grass roots." To have this quality, it should serve a relatively small population and thus operate in a comparatively small area of the city, and its formation should be initiated by the people of the area it will serve.

#### Neighborman and Neighborhood Council

The two chief elements of this organization will be (1) a neighborman and (2) a neighborhood council. Each of them will have responsibilities in the new process that is being inserted into the city governmental system. In addition, these two elements will be interrelated in important ways.

The neighborman will be a liaison, a channel of communication, and a developer of mutual understanding between the neighborhood and the city government (and possibly other local governments, too). He will consider citizen complaints about the inadequacy of public services in the area and seek their resolution with the appropriate public officials and agencies. He will work with the neighborhood council and other local organizations in developing public and private programs and goals for the area. He will attend and participate in meetings of the neighborhood council and make reports to it. He will cooperate with the citizen grievance office (a position in the city government recommended for adoption by the Los Angeles City Charter Commission) in the exchange of information about complaints by citizens of the area served by the neighborman, but he will not be administratively responsible to this officer. In brief, the job of neighborman will be that of expediting and coordinating, as well as increasing the rapport between the local citizenry and its government.

The neighborhood council will serve as a forum for discussing and reaching conclusions about neighborhood issues, problems, and goals,



including those relating to planning and zoning, and it will transmit its conclusions to the proper elected and appointed public authorities. To perform these responsibilities adequately, the council will hold regular meetings, which will be convened not less than once a month.

This council will appoint the neighborman, who will be responsible to and removable by it. Seven members elected from the neighborhood for four-year terms by its residents will constitute the council. The members will not be compensated.

To carry out his duties competently, the neighborman will have to be highly knowledgeable about the organization, operations, and interrelations of governmental services. His principal concern will be with city services, but he will also be familiar with those of other local governments, and state and national governments as well. To gain the full knowledge necessary for the position, he will be trained in a special course of several months' duration by outside trainers and public personnel.

The neighborman will be a resident of the area who is familiar with its problems and needs, and he therefore will not be a newcomer to the locality. He will not be recruited from the established city bureaucracy and sent to a neighborhood to do his work. Instead, he will be a resident of the neighborhood he serves and will be selected for the position by the neighborhood council, a locally-based institution. Moreover, to avoid the development of a neighborhood bureaucracy, the population of the neighborhood organization should be of such a size that it may be served by a single neighborman. Thus, there should be only one neighborman in each neighborhood.

The neighborman will operate from an office in the neighborhood (not from a downtown site), and he will be furnished secretarial assistance. He should receive a monthly salary not less than that paid to a field deputy of a councilman.





public school teachers in the Los Angeles system possessing five years' experience, but he should be paid for twelve months' work a year. It is likely that a number of neighbors will be recruited from the teaching ranks, and the minimum bench mark stated here, which amounts to about \$8,750, seems both reasonable and pertinent.<sup>35</sup>

#### Population, Optional Nature, and Boundaries

For this new public neighborhood organization to function effectively, it must contain a population of moderate size within the boundaries of its service area. That population must be neither too small nor too large. A minimum population of 5,000 should be established. A neighborman would be kept busy giving attention to the problems of a poor neighborhood of this population. Conversely, in a neighborhood of fewer problems a neighborhood organization could serve a larger population. However, the number of people should not be huge, as then the organization would lose its grass-roots quality and a single neighborman would not be able to carry the work load. It therefore seems advisable to set a maximum population for the neighborhood organization to be followed in the formation proceedings; a figure of 30,000 would be appropriate.<sup>36</sup>

This type of organization should be available to all sections of the city. It would be a grievous error, however, to require such an entity to be created in every section. Whether the city becomes blanketed with them or they are established in only a few areas should grow out of separate determinations by the residents of individual neighborhoods. Such entities will be successful only if they are formed as a product of

<sup>35</sup> If the neighborman started at the beginning salary, he should be permitted to rise at least to \$12,000 through five annual steps.

<sup>36</sup> Coincidentally, the population range suggested for these neighborhood organizations closely parallels that employed by various planning agencies in studies of city sub-areas. They speak of a minimum of 4,000 and a general maximum of 30,000 to 50,000.

this point



neighborhood interest and action. For a central authority to impose them on neighborhoods in certain parts of the city or on a city-wide basis would doom them to failure. It would represent another example of some people's doing something for other people. Accordingly, the formation of this organization in any area should be optional with the local residents.

The boundaries of this neighborhood unit should be ascertained by the residents of the local area, who should make their determination within the prescribed population range. As noted earlier in this study, no precise boundaries are widely recognized for sub-areas of Los Angeles. However, this should not be interpreted to mean that suitable boundaries for these neighborhood units may not be decided upon. Milton Kotler of the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington has cogently explained the situation: "A big question today is how to define a neighborhood. People are desperately trying to locate it by sociometric measures and by numerous other artificial means. These are not the ways to find a neighborhood. A neighborhood will disclose its boundaries once it has some authority to govern."<sup>37</sup>

#### Formation Procedure

The legal procedure for establishing these neighborhood public organizations should be incorporated into the city charter of Los Angeles. The procedure should consist of (1) a petition, specifying the territorial boundaries of the entity and signed by at least 15 percent of the voters of the area, to place the question of formation of the ballot in the area, (2) an election in the area on the formation proposal, with the question decided by majority vote, <sup>and</sup> (3) the selection at that election

<sup>37</sup> "Table Talk/Finding the City," The Center Magazine, May, 1968, p. 14.





of the seven members of the neighborhood council, who would be nominated by petition. The boundaries would have to be determined within the prescribed population range, and no part of the territory of the proposed entity could be within the limits of an already established comparable unit. Alternatively, the formation question could be decided by either majority vote with at least a certain percentage of the registered voters participating or majority approval of the registered voters. However, both of these options run counter to modern electoral practices. The legal procedure for dissolving these neighborhood organizations should be the same as the formation procedure and should also be included in the city charter.

#### Cost Allocation

How the costs of this neighborhood public organization are to be paid should depend upon the financial resources of the residents of the neighborhood. If their resources are adequate, the costs should be paid by a special per capita tax charged to them. If they are inadequate, the expenses should be paid from general city funds. These two methods of financing should be specified in the city charter. Whether resources are sufficient or insufficient may be measured by using such standards as per capita personal income and rate of unemployment in the neighborhood.

Alternatively, it may be argued that a part of the financing of this type of organization in economically poor neighborhoods should be by a special per capita tax. The bases for this argument are that the poor should exert a degree of self-help and they will make sounder use of the organization if they have a direct financial involvement. Without necessarily discounting these contentions, the judgment here is that such a financial requirement might generally stifle the interest of residents of poor





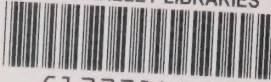
neighborhoods in establishing these organizations. The importance of getting them into operation in such neighborhoods, where there is local interest in doing so, is far greater than the reduction in the city's financial responsibility that would accrue from making a portion of the costs a neighborhood charge.

### Meeting the Problem

This new neighborhood public organization will not be used merely in poor areas, although its usefulness is most evident there. The problem of citizen-government relations is present in neighborhoods of different economic levels--well-to-do and middle class as well as impoverished. The need is widespread for more meaningful citizen communication and interaction with the big city government of huge Los Angeles. The neighborhood public organization is a means of satisfying that need and producing an important breakthrough in a serious problem.

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